



1998-99 CATS ASSESSMENT

Open-Response Item Scoring Worksheet

Grade 11—Arts & Humanities

The **academic expectation** addressed by “Stage Directions” is

2.24 Students have knowledge of major works of art, music, and literature and appreciate creativity and contributions of the arts and humanities.

The **core content** addressed by this item includes

Theater: Skills and Knowledge

Elements of Production

Roles

Stage Directions

When playwrights write plays, they include stage directions in their scripts. Explain the importance of these stage directions and why it is necessary for the director to understand them. Provide **three** examples to illustrate your ideas.



SCORING GUIDE

Grade 11 Arts & Humanities

Score	Description
4	Student clearly explains the importance of stage directions and why it is necessary for the director to understand them. Student provides three examples that clearly illustrate his or her ideas.
3	Student generally explains the importance of stage directions and why it is necessary for the director to understand them. Student provides two or three examples that illustrate his or her ideas. OR Student clearly explains the importance of stage directions. Student provides three examples that clearly illustrate his or her ideas. Response makes no reference to the director.
2	Student provides a limited explanation of the importance of stage directions. Student provides one to three examples that illustrate his or her ideas. Student may or may not make reference to the director. OR Student generally explains the importance of stage directions and why it is necessary for the director to understand them. Examples are not clear or are missing.
1	Student's response is minimal (e.g., student provides a limited explanation of the importance of stage directions but does not provide any examples).
0	Response is totally incorrect or irrelevant.
Blank	No response.

Importance of stage directions

- convey the creative ideas and aesthetic vision of the playwright
 - may give clues to general atmosphere/mood and the emotions of characters
- give stage production information:
 - scenery—e.g., location of doors, windows, significant props
 - costuming and props
 - sound or lighting effects
- movements/actions of characters:
 - entrances and exits
 - on-stage movements
 - emotional mood for delivery of lines



ANNOTATED STUDENT RESPONSE

Grade 11 Arts & Humanities

Sample 4-Point Response of Student Work

Student Response

When a playwright produces his masterpieces, he/she envisions a certain mood and direction for the play. These wishes of the playwright are accomplished by stage directions within the script of a play. Stage directions, such as the position and movement of a character, the lighting of a scene, and the settings of props, are essential in keeping with the playwright's vision of his /her work. A direction within the script that tells the character where to stand, who to face, and when to enter or exit the stage, are the crucial details that cause a play to flow accordingly. In addition, the position and movement of a character enhances dramatic effect. For example, if a character is moving away from another character as they are speaking, the audience senses a feeling of isolation. The lighting of a scene also affects the mood of a play. Simply dimming or brightening the stage lights alters the scene on stage and the disposition of the characters. For example, during a soliloquy, a monologue performed by an actor about his internal thoughts and feelings, lighting is a key instrument to enhance the play in the absence of other speaking characters and moving scene. Lastly, the settings of a scene, including furniture or the lack of within a room, the position of different rooms on stage, and any outdoor scenes are essential in the audience's full perception of the play. Even a scantily furnished room with an old bed and a burning candle speaks to the audience of the barrenness the playwright is conveying through this stage direction. Since stage directions are so essential in a play's production, the director of the play must understand them to fully create the playwright's desires.

Student clearly explains the importance of stage directions (i.e., "essential in keeping with the playwright's vision" and providing "the crucial details that cause a plan to flow accordingly").

Student provides three examples that illustrate his or her ideas (i.e., mood created by movements of the actors, lighting, and the position of furniture).

Student clearly explains why it is necessary for the director to understand the stage directions (i.e., "to fully create the playwright's desires").

Overall, the student demonstrates a thorough knowledge of the importance of stage directions and why it is necessary for the director to understand them. The student's examples are detailed and clearly illustrate his or her ideas.



ANNOTATED STUDENT RESPONSE

Grade 11 Arts & Humanities

Sample 4-Point Response of Student Work

Student Response

It is extremely important for a director to understand and use stage directions because they help to convey the message the playwright intended to send. These stage directions also reflect what a character is feeling. Without these directions, the actor or actress can't make the character come alive to the audience. The director must understand them so that they may provide blocking (or positions on the stage) that matches the character's mood.

One example of a direction is which side of the stage to enter and exit from. This might not seem important to some people, but if a character leaves on the wrong side and walks through an invisible wall, the audience will notice and therefore be less impressed with the caliber of a play or musical.

Another example of a direction is "stands alone." This means the character is all alone on the stage and will probably be saying a monologue or soliloquy. It simply wouldn't do to have other characters milling around watching one character pour their heart out to the audience.

The last example includes props. If the direction says to pick up flower, it is either symbolic or about to be referred to by someone on the stage. Either way, it is crucial to that part of the play.

Student clearly explains why it is necessary for the director to understand the stage directions (i.e., the director helps to "convey the message the playwright intended to send").

Student clearly explains the importance of stage directions (i.e., "reflect what a character is feeling" and "make the character come alive to the audience").

Student provides three examples that clearly illustrate his or her ideas (i.e., not walking through an "invisible wall," standing alone during a monologue or soliloquy," and picking up a flower or some other prop).

Overall, the student demonstrates a thorough knowledge of the importance of stage directions and when it is necessary for the director to understand them. The student's examples are detailed and clearly illustrate his or her ideas.



ANNOTATED STUDENT RESPONSE

Grade 11 Arts & Humanities

Sample 3-Point Response of Student Work

Student Response

By including stage directions, playwrights give a more accurate and detailed description of the scene. They are giving actors and directors a way to recreate perfectly the playwright's vision. If the director didn't share the same "vision", he may lose some of the feeling by an incorrect direction. For example, in a romantic scene, you'd lose the emotion if the lover, were on separate sides of the stage, professing their devotion!

Insertion of directions also gives the director a sort of outline for stage. Though he's free to place actors wherever he sees fit, having the original placements/directions sometimes gives ideas to the cast and director.

The director must also understand directions because of technical aspects. If a direction is not followed, lighting may be incorrect. For example, if a stage direction says "down; center" and the actor is placed "up; right", lighting will not catch the actor.

← Student generally explains the importance of stage directions (i.e., "give a more accurate and detailed description of the scene" and give "actors and directors a way to recreate perfectly the playwright's vision").

← Student generally explains why it is necessary for the director to understand the stage directions (i.e., provides director with the playwright's "vision" and provides an "outline" for the stages).

← Student provides two examples that illustrate his or her ideas (i.e., lovers need to be together on stage, and lighting needs to be correct).

Overall, the student demonstrates a general knowledge of the importance of stage directions and when it is necessary for the director to understand them. The student's examples are general but accurate.



ANNOTATED STUDENT RESPONSE

Grade 11 Arts & Humanities

Sample 2-Point Response of Student Work

Student Response

Stage, directions are very important to the process of constructing and organizing a masterful play. The playwrights add in these directions to smooth out the rough spots and keep the play running smoothly with few mistakes. Some examples of stage directions are in the lighting. The spotlihter must know who to light up to get the full effect of the scripture being read. Another example is in the backgrounds being put up. The stage hands must put the right backgrounds up so to help the audience imagine this play is really happening. The final example of stage direction written into a script is the movements of the characters. A playwright will write in who he wants facing who and where they are at on the stage. All of these direction are assembled into the script to effectively produce a worthwhile play.

← Student provides a limited explanation of the importance of stage directions (i.e., “keep the play running smoothly”).

← Student provides three examples that illustrate his or her ideas without reference to the director (i.e., lighting, set background, and movement of actors).

Overall, the student demonstrates a limited knowledge of the importance of stage directions. The student’s examples are limited but accurate.

Sample 1-Point Response of Student Work

Student Response

1) My first example is when a person has a deep voice and that person voice might not go along with that part in the story or that character.

2) The second example is when the actor has to act the part out or do whatever. That person probably couldn't do that certain thing, that the director would like him to do.

3) My third example is when it is time to do your part without your script in site, and the director might get mad, because you are having trouble with the lines and not knowing your parts.

← Student provides one minimal example that relates to stage directions (i.e., appropriate voice).

← Student attempts to provide a second example, but it is not relevant to stage directions.

Overall, the student demonstrates minimal knowledge of the importance of stage directions.



INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

Grade 11 Arts & Humanities

The open-response item “**Stage Directions**” assesses students’ knowledge in the area of theater. Specifically, the item assesses students’ knowledge of the elements of production and the roles of the playwright and director. Students are asked to discuss the importance of stage directions in the script and why it is necessary for the director to understand them. The instructional strategies below present ideas for helping students explore and acquire the knowledge being assessed.

Provide students with scripts from which they can locate examples of stage directions. Have the students list all directions they find into three categories: (1) voice expression, (2) character action such as exits and entrances or on-stage movements, and (3) stage production information for props, costumes, lighting, and sound.

Have students work individually, in pairs, in small groups, and/or as a class to complete any or all of the following activities:

- Write a short scene without stage directions; then have the playwright(s) rewrite it with the stage directions. Have another student add directions to the first version of the script. Have the students compare the scripts for character expression and movements or other stage directions the playwrights have included.
- Learn and practice stage location terms such as “stage right” or “center front.” Have each student plot the terms on a diagram of the stage. Explain why it would be important for an actor and director to know those location terms.
- Write a list of stage directions for movement from one location to another such as (moves stage left) and practice those directions on a stage.
- List adverbs that describe how a line in the script might be said such as “loudly,” “sweetly,” or “mysteriously.” Rehearse two or three factual lines with each of the voice stage directions on the list.
- Discuss the effect made by saying a line in different ways.
- Write a short dialogue or improvise a scene where the dialogue refers to a sound effect.
- Discuss the importance of stage direction for all persons (cast, crew, and director) involved with a play. Name at least one reason for each person involved with the production to understand the stage directions.